



**New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Rose Harvey
Commissioner

The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza • Agency Building 1, Albany, New York 12238
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**AGENCY DECISION
AND
STATEMENT OF FINDINGS**

**Adoption of a Master Plan for Green Lakes State Park
Designation of a Park Preservation Area
Designation of a Bird Conservation Area**

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has prepared a Final Master Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FMP/FEIS) dated March 23, 2011, for Green Lakes State Park.

By the authority vested in me in State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, I do hereby adopt the Final Master Plan for Green Lakes State Park. I also designate portions of the park, as detailed in the Master Plan, Park Preservation and Bird Conservation Areas.

My decision is based on the attached Findings Statement and the content of the FMP/FEIS, which have been prepared according to the provisions of Part 617, the regulations implementing Article 8 of Environmental Conservation Law - the State Environmental Quality Review Act.

Rose Harvey, Commissioner
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Date

**State Environmental Quality Review
FINDINGS STATEMENT
Green Lakes State Park - Master Plan**

May 11, 2011

Pursuant to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act – SEQRA) of the Environmental Conservation Law and 6 NYCRR Part 617, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), as lead agency, makes the following findings:

Title of the Action:

Adoption and Implementation of a Master Plan for Green Lakes State Park

Location:

Green Lakes State Park is located in the Town of Manlius in Onondaga County, New York.

Description of the Action:

The Master Plan for Green Lakes State Park provides long term guidance for the development and management of the park and protection of its resources as summarized below.

Date of Completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS): March 23, 2011

These findings consider the relevant environmental impacts, facts and conclusions disclosed in the Final EIS; weigh and balance relevant environmental impacts with social, economic and other considerations; provide a rationale for the agency's decision; certify that the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met; and certify that consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is one which avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that included within the plan are those mitigation measures that will avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable.

Findings:

1. The Final Plan was subject to a complete Environmental Impact Statement process including a public information meeting and a public hearing. The Final EIS contains a chapter on responses to comments on the Draft EIS. This chapter contains clarification of issues raised during the review of the Draft EIS. It also provides information that has been used in the preparation of the Final Plan.
2. Green Lakes State Park is located in Onondaga County in the Town of Manlius. The park is located approximately five miles east of Syracuse and is bordered to the north by Route 290 and Old Erie Canal State Park, and the Sisters of St. Francis' Alverna Heights property. The western border is Route 257 and the eastern boundary lies parallel to Pierson Road. The southern boundary is a jagged line that abuts the village of Fayetteville and a portion of Route 5.

3. Green Lakes State Park was established in 1928 when the State Council of Parks purchased the 500 acres surrounding Green and Round Lake. Much of the park was initially developed through the use of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC.) Additional purchases throughout the years bring the total to 1,774 acres.
4. The park is open year-round and hosts approximately 850,000 visitors annually. During the summer months, the main attractions to the park are the beach, picnic areas, lakeside trails and golf course.
5. Green Lakes State Park contains a wealth of natural resources and rich biodiversity. About three-quarters of the park is comprised of natural cover including lakes, forests, fields and successional shrublands.
6. Two significant natural communities are documented in the park – the meromictic lakes (Green and Round Lakes) and the maple-basswood rich mesic forest. The lakes are two of only eleven glacial plunge basin meromictic lakes in the United States. Round Lake is registered as a National Natural Landmark with the National Park Service. The maple-basswood rich mesic forest is comprised of about 140 acres of old growth forest. No rare or endangered plants have been found in the park.
7. Green Lakes State Park provides a diversity of habitats for birds and 161 different bird species have been documented within the park. Eleven state-listed birds have been observed in the park, including the bald eagle, short-eared owl, pied-billed grebe, northern harrier, osprey, sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper’s hawk, northern goshawk, horned lark, vesper sparrow and grasshopper sparrow. The western half of the park contains several successional old fields, which provide habitat for state-listed grassland bird species.
8. There is a wide variety of recreation resources in the park. Camping and cabins are available for overnight visitors. Swimming, hiking, mountain biking, golf, disk golf, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, picnicking, fishing and nature studies are all available at the park as well as diverse opportunities for park visitors to relax and enjoy the park’s natural and scenic beauty.
9. The plan identifies vision statements and goals for the park. The vision for Green Lakes State Park is that the natural, cultural and physical resources of the park will continue to be available and protected so it is a place for visitors to enjoy, appreciate and learn about those resources as they participate in the recreational opportunities the park offers. The overall goal for the park is to provide a balance between recreational, interpretive and educational opportunities and the preservation, protection and maintenance of the park’s natural, cultural and physical resources.
10. The plan presents a series of “preferred alternatives” for future development and operation of Green Lakes State Park. Status quo alternatives were evaluated for each element of the plan as well. The Status Quo Alternative consists of the current facilities, programs and practices. The various preferred alternatives were combined to create a single preferred alternative for recreation development and resource protection into one that best met the goals for the park. This alternative represents the Final Master Plan. The actions described in the plan present the long-term vision for the rehabilitation and enhancement of public use facilities and the protection and preservation of the cultural and natural resources at the park.

11. The plan considers the historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the park and responds to the recreational needs and safety of park patrons, protection of natural, cultural and scenic resources and the principles of sustainability. The plan sets forth a long-term vision to guide future development of new and existing park facilities. The plan also recognizes that the initiation of each specific action will be determined by the level of funding available to OPRHP in future years, as well as including priorities of implementing capital improvements to meet these goals.
12. Article 20 of the Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law outlines the process for designation of entire parks or portions of parks as part of a statewide Park Preserve system. The purpose of such designations is to conserve and protect park lands containing wildlife, flora, scenic, historic and archeological sites that are unique and rare in New York State. Under the Master Plan a Park Preservation Area will be designated within Green Lakes State Park. The area includes 105 acres in the Old Growth Area within the National Natural Landmark and the area surrounding Round Lake. The designation is consistent with the type and extent of use proposed in the plan and will encourage the study and interpretation of environmental resources.
13. The Bird Conservation Areas (BCA) program is established in Environmental Conservation Law Section 11-2001, and authorizes the designation of BCAs in order to integrate bird conservation into agency planning, management and research projects within the context of the agency mission. Under the Master Plan a significant portion of the park is designated as a Bird Conservation Area. The designation itself does not preclude existing or future land use proposals, nor should the designation prohibit park development or operational needs.
14. In addition to the above designations, the Master Plan will provide protection of natural resources through several means including development of lake management strategies, monitoring for wetland impacts, management of the grassland in the western portion of the park consistent with a grassland plan and preparation of an invasive species management plan.
15. The park will continue to be classified as a Recreation Park.
16. Green Lakes State Park offers swimming, boating, trails, hiking, running, mountain biking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, golfing, disc golf, fishing, picnic areas, campgrounds, cabins, and interpretive/education programs. Improvements and upgrades to these resources are documented throughout the Master Plan. The Master Plan also calls for improvements to recreational facilities including providing suitable locations for fishing and lake access around Green Lake and replacement of the basketball courts around the beach area.
17. The Final Trails Plan provides guidance for the upgrading and maintenance of the trail system to accommodate a variety of year-round recreational uses and provide for educational and interpretive experiences. Key components of the plan include increased mountain biking loop opportunities, signage to cross country ski trails, appropriate trail connections between high use areas, enhanced trail access in the western portion of the park to reduce overuse and environmental degradation on the lake trails, improved trail head and trail intersection signage, access to and interpretation of cultural and historical resources and improvements to unsustainable sections of trails.

18. Interpretation and educational opportunities throughout the park are expanded and include such things as new signage and brochures about the grasslands and about biodiversity and habitat sensitivity around the lakes; construction of lake viewing platforms and a new educational center; and development of an Interpretive Plan.
19. Cultural resource protection and projects that result in ground disturbance will take place in consultation with OPRHP Field Services Bureau staff on a case by case basis. New structures will be compatible with their historic context.
20. Protection of scenic resources will be considered within all projects. Enhancements will occur around Green Lake, on the western trails, and through vegetation management.
21. The implementation of the Master Plan for Green Lakes State Park is divided into three priority phases. The initiation and completion of these priority phases will depend upon funding and demand and will be balanced with the need to make ongoing capital investments to maintain and rehabilitate the park's roads, utilities, buildings, and other infrastructure.
22. Maintenance of aging infrastructure has been examined. Roads, drainage, electric, water and sewer systems, as well as deterioration of building and park features are ongoing concerns. Park operations, maintenance and infrastructure will be improved under the Master Plan including the following: storm water management improvements; energy and water conservation improvements; maintenance and rehabilitation of park roadways; implementation of the Beach Access Improvements Plan; renovation of picnic areas and campgrounds; rehabilitation of the Old Administration Building; improvements to the golf course and golf clubhouse; conducting a park-wide sanitary system assessment, including the beach area septic improvements; construct the connection between the Capital Facilities Regional Maintenance Area and the park office in conjunction with new fuel tank relocation; expansion of the park office; rehabilitation of the historic Boat House/adjacent booth and dock area as part of prioritized interpretive plans; conduct a boundary survey of the park, relocation of the Park Police personnel to a new building near the park office, construction of an education center, new shelter at Lakeview Picnic Area, construct a day use trail head off the campground roadway and ultimately relocate the Rolling Hills Campground.
23. Impacts associated with the implementation of the plan and mitigation measures identified are as follows:
 - Environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Master Plan have been addressed under the following general areas: traffic and access, recreation/open space, land, water resources, biological resources/ecology, cultural/ archeological resources, scenic resources, and public health and safety. Actions outlined in the Master Plan are designed to minimize impacts in all of these areas.
 - The Master Plan does not significantly change traffic patterns or access to the park. Some improvements are proposed that will provide safer traffic flow and better circulation and signage. Minor expansion is proposed for the golf course parking lot. Improvements are proposed for the East Beach parking area including the addition of treed islands and/or

bioswales to divert stormwater. Creation of the gravel trailhead parking area will provide easier access to the trails in the western portion of the park and take some pressure off the Lake Trails.

- The plan will result in substantial beneficial recreation and open space impacts. It provides a variety of new and improved recreation facilities and visitor amenities including an Education Center, trail system enhancements, and improvements to camping and picnic areas. Implementation of the Trails Plan will result in an organized trail system which will accommodate a variety of uses including walking/hiking, biking and cross-country skiing. A new park office and Park Police complex will provide improved visitor services while also incorporating sustainable design.
- Implementation of the plan will result in some physical changes to the land, particularly where new recreation facilities and trails will be constructed or segments of trails relocated. Most new recreation facilities proposed in the plan, such as the campground relocation and Park Office/Park Police Complex, will be located in open areas many of which are already previously disturbed and require little ground disturbance. The construction of new trails or trail sections may require some vegetation removal and soil disturbance depending on type and location of the trail. Disturbance will be limited primarily to the required width of the trail corridor.
- Implementation of the Master Plan will have minimal impact to water resources. Many actions included in the plan are designed to protect and improve lake water quality and will have beneficial impacts. Stormwater drainage improvements will be a component of each project within the park and implemented on a case by case basis. Improvements to the Brookside Trail will enhance (1) the quantity of the trail user experience and (2) the protection of the nearby wetland area. Long term monitoring of the biota and lake water quality is included in the plan.
- The plan calls for additional research to investigate methods to reduce the amount of sand leaving the beach and entering the lake. Designating lake access points and providing interpretive materials for anglers will also help prevent shoreline degradation. Round Lake, a National Natural Landmark, will receive further recognition and protection with the proposed Park Preservation Area designation.
- Implementation of the Master Plan will have a positive impact on the natural resources within the park. Impacts associated with proposed improvements, such as the new campground location, new Education Center and Park Office/Park Police Complex, will be minimal since the proposed improvements have been sited in areas with previous disturbance or development, low environmental sensitivity and which generally possess accessibility to and use of existing infrastructure. The importance of the natural resources within the park is recognized with the designation of portions of the park as a Bird Conservation Area and a Park Preservation Area. The designations recognize these areas as containing significant ecological and scenic resources and the importance of these areas. Grassland birds will benefit through implementation of the Grassland Management Plan and native plants in the park will benefit from development of an invasive species plan. Improvements in waste management practices, particularly in the Golf Course

Maintenance Stockpile Area, will reduce the potential spread of invasive species in the Old Growth area.

- The Master Plan recognizes and protects the historic and cultural resources within the park. Specific mitigation measures have been identified related to removal of some stone picnic tables including documentation of the locations of the tables, photographs of the tables and their possible relocation elsewhere in the park. Additional rehabilitation and/or modification of historic structures will be done in consultation with Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau (FSB) staff on a case by case basis. New structures designed for the park will be compatible with their historic context. To assure no adverse impacts to archeological resources, areas may require consultation with FSB staff prior to any ground disturbance.
- Implementation of the Master Plan will not result in any significant adverse impacts on scenic resources in the park. Views of Green Lake, Round Lake and the surrounding landscapes will be protected and maintained through the actions recommended in the plan. Important views will be preserved. Historic landscapes and scenic vistas of the lakes will be analyzed and strategies developed to improve historic views while protecting significant species.
- Public health and safety are an important element in park operations. Facility design and construction will meet applicable health and safety codes, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

24. The plan describes the process for supplemental environmental review. The plan also provides for guidance as to when additional environmental review may be required and identifies the types of actions that are likely to require additional review. These include new actions not addressed within the plan that are not Type II actions within Part 617, any change from the preferred alternative for recreational and facility elements of the Plan that would result in significant adverse environmental impacts, and any leases, easements or other agreements between OPRHP and other entities that would affect resources in a manner that is not adequately addressed in the plan. Several items discussed in the Master Plan have been identified as likely to require additional review under SEQR as the scope of work for these projects is not known at this time.